FORUM

JERROLD LEVINSON
Contemplating Art. Essays in Aesthetics
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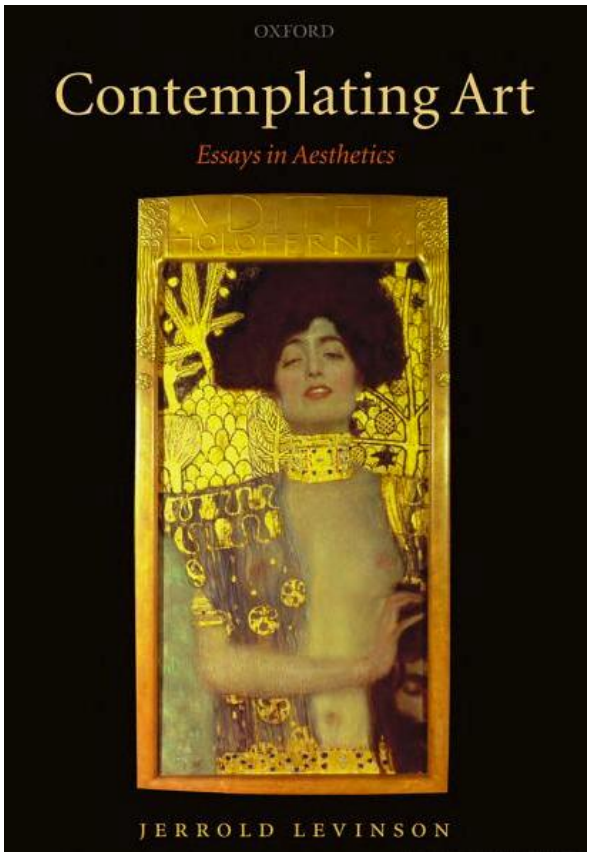

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CONTEMPLATING MUSIC

Introduzione

La filosofia della musica è uno dei principali campi cui Jerrold Levinson ha dedicato la sua riflessione e anche in CA, così come in *Music, Art and Metaphysics* (MAM) e *The Pleasures of Aesthetics* (PA), all'arte dei suoni è dedicata una specifica sezione che valorizza, accanto alla costituzione formale, i possibili contenuti della musica, emergenti in una contemplazione che è al contempo partecipazione attiva, di tipo sia emotivo sia riflessivo, da parte dell'ascoltatore. I saggi 'musicali' di CA, le cui tesi Levinson ha più recentemente sviluppato in varie direzioni[1], 1. approfondiscono la teoria dell'espressività musicale già presentata in MAM e PA (la cosiddetta 'teoria della persona', TP), 2. la articolano in relazione ad aspetti particolari dell'esperienza musicale (per es. la *performance*), e 3. ne esaminano il contributo per la comprensione della dimensione narrativa e drammatica della musica nonché, in generale 4., come elemento centrale del suo valore artistico. Qui mi concentrerò soprattutto sul punto 1., toccando poi più brevemente i punti 2., 3. e 4. Non muoverò particolari critiche alle tesi qui argomentate da Levinson (eccettuata la proposta di un'integrazione alla sua tesi sul valore intrinseco-esperienziale della musica), perché a differenza di alcune posizioni di altri filosofi analitici della musica, e anche di alcuni orientamenti dello stesso Levinson rispetto all'ontologia della musica (cui CA non offre particolari contributi), le condivido in larghissima misura. Piuttosto, presenterò quelli che mi sembrano i punti salienti della sezione musicale di CA, provando, in un caso, a difendere le proposte levinsoniane da alcune obiezioni.

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[1] Cfr. per es. *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Music*, «British Journal of Aesthetics» 49 (2009); *Philosophy and Music*, «Topoi», 28 (2009); *Musical Beauty*, «Teorema», 31 (2012); *Jazz Vocal Interpretation: A Philosophical Analysis*, «Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 71 (2013); *Popular Song as Moral Microcosm: Life Lessons from Jazz Standards*, «Philosophy», Supplement 71 (2013); *Die expressive Spezifität des Jazz*, «Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft», 59/1 (2014) (*Ästhetik des Jazz*, Hg. von A. Bertinetto, G. Bertram, D.M. Feige).

1. La teoria della persona

Levinson spiega l'espressività musicale con il seguente argomento. Un brano o un passaggio musicale è espressivo di un'emozione soltanto qualora sia ascoltato, da un ascoltatore esperto, come espressione di essa. Ma l'atto di esprimere richiede un agente che (si) esprime. Quindi, chi ascolta la musica come espressiva è impegnato ad ascoltare (o almeno a immaginare) un *agente* nella musica – la *persona* musicale: un ente fittizio «caratterizzato soltanto dall'emozione che la ascoltiamo esprimere e dal gesto musicale mediante cui la esprime» (CA, p. 93). La tesi è che, *se* ascoltiamo la musica come espressiva, è perché attribuiamo direttamente e immediatamente (cioè in modo non inferenziale e per lo più inconsapevole[2]) l'emozione o lo stato affettivo espressi a un agente, e questo anche quando, pur riconoscendo un carattere espressivo, non siamo in grado di individuare precisamente l'emozione espressa. Questo agente non è (per forza) – come volevano le teorie romantiche – il compositore o l'interprete, ma un soggetto immaginario – e per questo indefinito: la *persona* musicale, che si costituisce attraverso la gestualità musicale che l'ascoltatore percepisce come espressiva.

La questione principale concerne la difendibilità di TP. Tra le obiezioni discusse, e respinte, in CA (pp. 97-107) quella più pericolosa è se per spiegare l'espressività sia necessario supporre un soggetto fittizio che provi le emozioni. Infatti, la validità di TP dipende da quella della premessa che 'l'atto di esprimere richiede un agente che esprime', una tesi che molti rifiutano. In particolare secondo Joseph Margolis non è ovvio che ogni espressività debba essere una forma di espressione[3]. Spiegando l'espressività esclusivamente come forma di espressione, non si riuscirebbe a chiarire alcuni fenomeni espressivi in cui è evidente l'assenza di un soggetto che si esprime e nel cui caso il riconoscimento del carattere espressivo dipende dai criteri esterio-

[2] La non-inferenzialità dell'attribuzione dell'emozione espressa alla persona musicale è una delle differenze della teoria di Levinson rispetto alle teorie della *persona* musicale di Robinson e Vermazen. Cfr. J. Robinson, *Deeper than Reason, Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music and Art*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005; B. Vermazen, *Expression as Expression*, «Pacific Philosophical Quarterly», 67 (1986), pp. 196-224.

[3] J. Margolis, *On Aesthetics: An Unforgiving Introduction*, Belmont, CA, Wadsworth, 2009, p. 88.

ri di pratiche culturali e sociali. Insomma, le attribuzioni di predicati espressivi non implicherebbero stati psicologici né reali né fittizi. Il ricorso a un soggetto fittizio sarebbe errato, perché l'espressività dipende semplicemente da pratiche condivise, che hanno le loro regole (le loro 'grammatiche' per dirla con Wittgenstein) e funzionano sul piano della mediazione storico-culturale. L'espressività riconoscibile percettivamente dipenderebbe da *topoi* e convenzioni caratterizzanti un genere, una tradizione, una cultura. Il punto di forza dell'obiezione è il tentativo di stabilizzare l'espressività, oggettivandola come risultato di mediazioni culturali. Ciò consente di capire come e perché un ascoltatore sia in grado di afferrare il carattere espressivo di un brano di un genere di cui è esperto, mentre non riesca a farlo se, non essendo avvezzo a quel genere di musica, non ne domina la grammatica.

L'argomento della dimensione culturale e grammaticale dell'espressività ha buon gioco, per es., contro la 'teoria della somiglianza' di Kivy e Davies[4], che, come Margolis, presuppongono la distinzione tra *esprimere un'emozione E* ed *essere espressivo di E*, cioè *avere soltanto l'apparenza esteriore dell'espressione di E*. Cionondimeno, se usato come obiezione contro TP, tale argomento è inefficace. L'espressione emozionale, tanto ordinaria quanto artistica, ricorre certamente a figure espressive riconosciute, soggette a trasformazione storica e regolate da una grammatica culturale. Tuttavia, dire che l'espressione delle emozioni è esteriorizzata nei comportamenti regolati da grammatiche culturali non impedisce di sostenere – in parziale accordo con Wittgenstein – «che tali comportamenti pubblicamente osservabili siano parzialmente 'costitutivi' delle emozioni, essendo al contempo 'indicatori' delle componenti non-osservabili, interne, esperienziali di quelle emozioni»[5]. Dunque, il riconoscere la dimensione esteriore e grammaticale dell'espressione musicale non esclude che attraverso le figure espressive musicali si possa riconoscere l'espressione di un agente immaginario e che questo riconoscimento sia rilevante per il riconoscimento dell'espressività di un brano o di un passaggio. Anzi – e qui va cercato il contributo teorico specifico di

[4] P. Kivy, *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1981; S. Davies, *Themes in Philosophy of Music*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

[5] J. Levinson, comunicazione privata.

Levinson – l'attribuzione dell'espressione a una persona (fittizia) è necessaria per riconoscere la musica come espressiva. Una cosa è riconoscere attraverso l'ascolto una serie di figure espressive costruite culturalmente, individuando la grammatica dell'espressività di un brano. Altra cosa è sentire che il brano esprime emozioni e sentimenti. Così come si può distinguere tra il riconoscimento della gestualità espressiva convenzionale o tipica utilizzata da una persona e la credenza che tale gestualità sia non soltanto l'esercizio di una grammatica espressiva, ma rifletta davvero le emozioni di un soggetto, così nell'esperienza musicale il riconoscimento di una grammatica espressiva non è automaticamente il riconoscimento dell'espressione dell'emozione, e questo anche se la grammatica espressiva può essere lo strumento per tale espressione.

Si potrebbe ancora respingere TP, argomentando, come fa Christian Grüny[6], che il riconoscimento di un evento musicale come gesto espressivo non implica l'attribuzione del gesto a un portatore, e quindi a una persona, anche quando richieda una reazione emotiva da parte dell'ascoltatore. In che senso però i gesti possono essere svincolati da un soggetto che gesticola? Per riconoscere un mutamento o un movimento *come un gesto* dobbiamo attribuirlo a qualcuno, anche quando pur riconoscendo l'espressività del gesto non siamo in grado di categorizzare esattamente l'emozione espressa. Nella realtà se vedo un sorriso, non soltanto percepisco la gioia o la serenità *nel* comportamento, ma vedo il volto che sorride, percepisco l'agente. Anzi, percepisco l'agente insieme alla sua espressione, percepisco l'espressione come risultato dell'azione di un agente. Quindi, se percepisco un mutamento o un movimento sonoro come un gesto o come una serie di gesti, che esprimono emozioni o affetti cui sono a mia volta portato a rispondere emotivamente o affettivamente, è plausibile pensare che stia immaginando un agente che gesticola e che produce il gesto. Se ascolto un brano come espressivo, sento l'atto dell'espressione e questo implica l'ipotesi di una persona fittizia. La persona è richiesta per stabilire la connessione basilare con l'esperienza emozionale[7]. Se l'ascoltatore percepisce un gesto, perce-

[6] C. Grüny, *Die Kunst des Übergangs*, Weilerswist, Velbrück, 2014.

[7] Paolo Spinicci mi ha invitato a riflettere sulla seguente difficoltà di TP: l'espressività musicale può a volte essere irriducibile a una persona umana. La musica sembra a volte essere per es. espressione di un destino cosmico o di dimensioni emozionali sovrumane, imperso-

pisce il gesto di qualcuno: altrimenti percepisce un mutamento o un movimento, ma non un gesto che ne esprime l'articolazione affettiva o emozionale. Percepire un mutamento non comporta necessariamente la percezione del mutamento come un gesto espressivo. Anche se a volte è difficile individuare il gesto espressivo e comprendere in quali fatti sonori esso si produca, ciò significa soltanto che gli ascoltatori devono apprendere a riconoscere il gesto espressivo musicale, così come devono imparare a cogliere l'espressività di un dipinto, e in modo analogo a come devono apprendere a interpretare la gestualità degli individui reali.

2. La persona nella performance

La questione è di primaria importanza anche per valutare come l'espressività del gesto reale del musicista mentre suona uno strumento o canta possa influire sulla comprensione dell'espressività della musica. In CA, infatti, senza tornare su specifiche questioni di ontologia dell'opera d'arte musicale, Levinson, sollecitato dal libro di R. Casati e J. Dokic *La Philosophie du son*[8], difende la centralità della reale esperienza *sonora* (percettiva e/o immaginativa) della musica per la comprensione dell'espressività[9]. La tesi è che l'espressività musicale – e dunque la *persona* musicale – sia spesso funzione della gestualità fisica reale dei musicisti, che il pubblico può osservare a un concerto o immaginare proprio attraverso l'articolazione sonora. Infatti, l'ascolto di un *gesto* musicale comporta l'utilizzo della capacità di formarsi un'immagine spaziale delle possibili sorgenti dei suoni a-

nali. Credo che Levinson potrebbe difendersi in due modi. 1. Le emozioni espresse dalla musica possono avere un carattere cosmico, destinale; possono cioè riguardare l'impotenza umana di fronte al caso, al destino, ecc. La musica può essere espressione di un'angoscia esistenziale generale, non attribuibile a questo o quell'altro individuo. Ciononostante ciò non significa che queste non siano emozioni di una persona: sono le emozioni di una persona che hanno per oggetto una dimensione emozionale (per es. di angoscia) sovra- o impersonale. 2. Le emozioni possono essere direttamente attribuite a un'entità disumana, impersonale. Per es. si potrebbe pensare di ascoltare l'espressione emozionale del destino. Ma anche in questo caso, sempre che si sia in grado di cogliere una dimensione espressiva, è difficile evitare di personalizzare l'*expresser* disumano. Come nella musica possiamo riconoscere l'espressività di un soggetto collettivo non individuale, così possiamo cogliervi l'espressività di un soggetto sovrumano o inumano.

[8] R. Casati e J. Dokic, *La philosophie du son*, Nîmes, Editions Jacqueline Chambon, 1994.

[9] È così respinta l'ipotesi teorica, pur affascinante, della *musica visiva*. Per motivi di spazio trascuro qui questo tema, cui ho prestato attenzione in A. Bertinetto, *Il pensiero dei suoni*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2012, pp. 21-22.

scoltati. Cogliere il gesto espressivo comporta l'apprendimento dei gesti comportamentali e performativi alla base del gesto musicale (cfr. CA pp. 77, 80). La percezione e la comprensione del carattere espressivo di un passaggio musicale dipende quindi anche dal carattere dell'azione alla base della produzione del suono, che sia essa direttamente esperita o immaginata. Se descriviamo come un 'accarezzare le corde' l'azione che fa sì che un violino generi una certa sequenza di note, attribuiremo al passaggio musicale una certa dolcezza o malinconia espressiva; se invece concettualizziamo un'azione al pianoforte come un 'martellare sui tasti', probabilmente individueremo in un'emozione più esuberante il carattere emotivo di quel passaggio (cfr. CA, pp. 82-83). Elaborando le considerazioni di Levinson, si può sostenere che l'ascoltatore che percepisce un brano musicale come suonato in modo espressivo può inferirne immaginativamente i movimenti fisicamente richiesti per eseguire la musica ascoltata. A sua volta, l'immaginazione visivo-spaziale può poi influire retrospettivamente sull'interpretazione del carattere espressivo del brano[10].

3. Narratività e drammaticità musicale

TP, come spiegazione dell'espressività musicale, è alla base dell'idea che alcuni generi musicali abbiano la possibilità di costruire, con le risorse espressive della musica, articolazioni narrative. Diversamente da quanto sostenuto dalle estetiche formaliste, almeno in certi casi l'esperienza musicale parrebbe simile, piuttosto che a quella delle arti visive, a quella della letteratura o del cinema[11]. Come queste arti, la musica si sviluppa nel tempo e ciò parrebbe suggerire la possibilità di attribuirle, oltre che la dimensione espressiva, un carattere *narrativo*.

Levinson difende questa tesi argomentando quanto segue. Una narrazione è caratterizzata dalla rappresentazione di almeno due eventi che si succedono nel tempo (tra cui è possibile sussista un legame causale). Per poter essere narrativa la musica strumentale dovrebbe poter non solo 1) rappresentare, ma 2) rappresentare eventi o stati di cose e 3) la loro connessione temporale e/o causale. Per

[10] Ho dedicato qualche riflessione a questo argomento in A. Bertinetto, *Vedere la musica*, «Estetica. Studi e ricerche», 1 (2011), pp. 83-123.

[11] Anzi, la musica è anche un elemento del cinema e Levinson analizza in proposito con la solita precisione e copia di riferimenti diversi possibili contributi della musica alla narrazione e all'espressione cinematografica (cfr. CA, pp. 143-183).

quanto concerne le prime due condizioni, basta che la musica, per poter essere narrativa, suggerisca gesti e azioni grazie al suo carattere espressivo. Per quanto riguarda la terza condizione, occorre che un passaggio musicale *a* risulti comprensibile e giustificato in quanto successivo a un passaggio musicale *b*. Spiegare *a* significa comprendere il motivo del suo succedere a *b.* Levinson sostiene che in proposito si può distinguere tra narratività *interna* ed *esterna*. La musica è *esternamente* narrativa (è l'*oggetto della narrazione* del compositore o del performer), se la 'storia' è una sequenza di eventi musicali. È *internamente* narrativa (è il *soggetto che narra* una storia), se la storia è ciò cui si riferiscono gli eventi musicali. In questo secondo caso la musica ha il carattere di una serie di enunciati che raccontano una storia e deve possedere elementi che svolgano la funzione di elementi tipici di un racconto come frasi riflessive del tipo 'tanto tempo fa, c'era una volta', ecc. (CA, pp. 133 s.). Diversamente da musica caratterizzata da una temporalità non lineare, verticale, discontinua, impressionistica e legata al momento, alcuni generi musicali sembrerebbero possedere questi elementi.

Inoltre, qualora si percepisca la musica come una sorta di mondo in cui gli eventi accadono indipendentemente da un compositore-narratore, la si interpreterà come *drammatica*, piuttosto che come narrativa[12]. A differenza della narrativa, il dramma è una presentazione diretta degli eventi: le azioni non sono raccontate, ma eseguite dagli attori sul palco o sullo schermo. Come sembra accadere nelle sonate di Beethoven, che offrono un susseguirsi di effetti drammatici costruiti sull'insanabile contrasto tra temi diversi, anche la musica può essere in tal senso intesa come un dramma di eventi che si svolgono qui e ora, *davanti* all'ascoltatore. Infatti, il dramma comporta l'esistenza di attori che agiscono: e talora sembrerà all'ascoltatore che anche in musica le *personae* musicali (magari rappresentate dai diversi strumenti musicali o da temi particolarmente caratterizzanti) non soltanto esprimano le loro emozioni, ma agiscano e interagiscano (lottando, correndo, urlando, dialogando, saltando, danzando, riposando, ecc.). Credo che Levinson offra qui la

[12] Correttamente Levinson chiarisce che quella tra narratività e drammaticità non è un'alternativa rigida: piuttosto, come esistono molti modelli letterari, così i brani musicali possono avere caratteri prevalentemente narrativi, epici, drammatici o lirici a seconda del loro contenuto, più che del genere (sinfonia, opera, ballata ecc.).

risposta corretta alle obiezioni formaliste circa la capacità della musica strumentale di narrare o inscenare una storia attraverso l'articolazione formale dei suoni. Se l'espressività musicale è riconducibile all'individuazione immaginativa di *personae* fittizie come soggetti delle emozioni che percepiamo nella musica, i contenuti determinati delle emozioni (che la musica difficilmente può veicolare) sono superflui per legittimare, almeno in certi generi, il riconoscimento di una vicenda narrata o rappresentata attraverso la musica[13].

4. Il valore della musica

TP è infine uno degli elementi con cui Levinson offre la sua soluzione alla questione del valore della musica. Anche in questo caso, l'approccio è pluralistico e antiriduzionistico. Molti sono i tipi di valore che l'esperienza musicale può possedere. Essi hanno a che fare con le possibili funzioni della musica per l'individuo e la comunità, con le sue specifiche qualità estetiche e artistiche (di alcune delle quali soltanto si può fare esperienza diretta[14]), con i suoi effetti morali e formativi, con la sua capacità di incarnare, implicare o articolare una forma o un'attività di pensiero[15]. Il suo valore primario (ma non esclusivo) è comunque quello *intrinseco-esperienziale*, cioè quello relativo all'esperienza dell'ascolto.

La tesi è che lo svolgimento temporale della musica, anche (ma non solo) per la sua generazione di aspettative deluse o soddisfatte, e le sua qualità espressive offrano un godimento qualitativamente migliore della semplice impressione sonora. Perciò «buona parte dell'interesse che la musica suscita va cercato in ciò che essa ci comunica a proposito dei gesti, delle azioni e dei sentimenti umani» (CA, 199[16]). Inoltre, specifica Levinson, il fattore determinante dell'intrinseco valore musicale è la fusione di forme che si evolvono nel tempo e dei contenuti (attitudini, qualità, emozioni, azioni, eventi)

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[13] Cfr. P. Rinderle, *Die Expressivität von Musik*, Paderborn, Mentis, 2010.

[14] In tal caso la presenza di certe qualità della musica, in particolare quelle espressive, può essere comunicata dai brividi provati dall'ascoltatore, che sono segnali corporei che indicano che si è percepito qualcosa di significativo e/o pregevole nella musica (cfr. CA, pp. 233-236).

[15] Per quest'ultimo aspetto cfr. CA, pp. 209-219.

[16] Cito dalla trad. it. di F. Focosi, *Il valore della musica*, in J. Levinson, *Arte, critica e storia. Saggi di estetica analitica*, a cura di F. Desideri e F. Focosi, Palermo, Estetica, 2001, p. 209.

comunicati, ovvero «cosa la musica comunica in relazione a come procede» (CA, 200; trad. it., p. 209). Come questo avvenga concretamente nei diversi generi può essere spiegato grazie a due modelli (il secondo dei quali ricomprende il primo). In base al primo modello, il fulcro dell'esperienza musicale è la progressione musicale che è insieme configurazione di forme ed espressione di contenuti. In base al secondo (comprensibile in base a TP), lo stesso contenuto espressivo è dotato di forma. L'espressione ha cioè una forma la quale comunica un contenuto drammatico.

Si potrebbe obiettare che quanto sostenuto da Levinson in proposito valga soprattutto per quei generi e quelle forme musicali costituite da una struttura lineare, caratterizzanti la musica occidentale a partire dal '700 e che non funzioni pienamente nel caso di musiche che valorizzano la dimensione non-lineare e invariante del suono (come, ad es., in certa musica improvvisata e/o sperimentale). In tali casi, si potrebbe dire riprendendo la distinzione levinsoniana, è il modo in cui la musica suona, piuttosto che il modo in cui essa procede, a imporsi all'attenzione dell'ascoltatore. Tuttavia, credo che il privilegio attribuito da Levinson (almeno a questo proposito) alla dimensione lineare della musica dipenda dal fatto che, anche nella sua riflessione sul valore della musica, egli insiste (a ragione) sui pregi dell'espressività (che può costituire di per sé un importante merito artistico) e così, con decisione e profonda intelligenza argomentativa, dischiude per la filosofia analitica della musica un orizzonte assai fecondo, alternativo a quello formalista sinora dominante.

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CONTEMPLATING ART TRANSHISTORICALLY

Among the very important topics poignantly dealt with by Jerrold Levinson in his book, the problem I wish to discuss concerns the relationship between the epistemic conditions of the concept, or concepts, of art and their 'irreducible historicality', as claimed in *Contemplating Art*. Briefly, my idea is that, on the one hand, Levinson's historical-intentional theory rests on a postulate – not self-evident enough – implying the kind of 'robust historicism' which Levinson

tries to evade. On the other hand, however, just the constraints ensuing from that postulate entail a theory with a purely formal, not substantive, structure, which risks to make the theory itself paradoxically less irreducibly historical than we should expect[17].

1. To what extent can a concept be historical?

When we say that a concept is 'historical', or 'has a history', we usually can mean, at least, two different things. We can say, in a weak sense, that 1) the concept is not documented in use before a certain date, for instance that of 'tuberculosis' before 19th century, although it is however necessary for the retrospective identification of all corresponding instances, even if they had appeared at the time of Ramses II. However, we can also mean, in a stronger sense, that 2) a concept evolves or undergoes a modification through *its* history. In the latter case, clearly, we have to put in question the *identity* conditions of the very concept. If we say that a concept C has historically changed, so that in the 20th century is not the same as it was, say, in the 15th century, we have also to make sure that the purported modifications actually pertain to the *same concept*, otherwise we cannot exclude the possibility that the difference refers to two different concepts, possibly sharing just the *same name*, as in normal cases of homonymy. In fact, the history of a name – whose identity is fixed by morphology – is not the history of a concept. If so, the conceptual historical difference, no matter of its nature, cannot be neither absolute nor too radical, and anyway it must be compatible with a deeper condition of historical *stability and identity*, without which it would be impossible to detect and commensurate the diachronic differences of *that* concept. Therefore, dealing with the historicity of concepts (or anything else), we should specify what changes and what remains the same. Nevertheless, on this point the position of Levinson seems not always univocal.

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[17] I will cite the works of J. Levinson as following: DA: *Defining Art Historically*, in Id. *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1990; RA: *Refining Art Historically*, «Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 47 (1993), pp. 21-33; EA: *Extending Art Historically,* «Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 51 (3), 1993, pp. 411-423. Simple page numbers refer to *Contemplating Art. Essays in Aesthetics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006.

On the one hand, it seems that «our present concept of art» (p. 15) is a modern phenomenon, emerged only during the 20th century or, more exactly, «around 1920» (DA, p. 24), though it is not so clear if that also entails that it would have been impossible to entertain such a concept before then. On the other hand, our concept is also a universal one, which we need to identify and define not only contemporary works of art, but also the works of past ages, both those which had, for contingent reasons, different concepts and those which had no art concept at all, as far as we can know.

This situation depends not only on an *epistemic* necessity, as Levinson has rightly acknowledged, by which it would be «an illusion» to think we can leave «our own conceptual equipment at home, thus arriving neutrally and virtuously at what is art» for ages and cultures other than ours, «in their own terms» (EA, p. 154). In fact, there is also another, more strictly conceptual need, independent from what we can know about artistic conceptions of the past thanks to philological means. To be judged as art an object must satisfy, *in whatever age it was produced*, the conditions of the present concept of art (that is Levinson's intentional-retrospective definition), even if at the time of production (or later) it may have been conceptualized otherwise. A painting of 15th century, for instance, is art not because it has some mimetic qualities, but only if satisfies the conditions of our present concept. That it exhibits *also* intrinsic mimetic qualities, possibly highly esteemed in the 15th century, is a fact that we may ascertain, but it remains an *irrelevant fact* from a definitional and conceptual point of view (if not so, the mimetic property would be a necessary or sufficient condition for «our concept» as well).

As a consequence, the difference between the modern concept of art, as Levinson understand it, and the older concepts is not only of *extensional* nature. Nowadays, the mimetic concept too would be extensionally different from what it was in 15th century, covering works and objects that had not yet been produced at that time. However, the mimetic concept (among others) and the post-1920 historical-intentional one are *intensionally* different, and individuate different formal objects, so that we cannot even surely consider them as coreferential unless we explain how to identify one and the same referent in an *extra-conceptual* way.

Therefore, Levinson's thesis «that currently the concept of art has no content beyond what art *has been*» so far (DA, p. 7) is ambiguous and risks to be tautological, and it is not better to think that such a «concrete» content could be purged of «any abstract principle or generalization» (ibid.), because, if so, the concept would turn out to be a simple enumerative list, a fortuitous heap, even though it included by chance all the items someone, in any time, decided to call 'art'. In reality, in order to retrospectively identify all and only the objects that are correctly definable as art, «our present concept» has to *overwrite* all the earlier concepts.

Thus, it seems that Levinson understand the historicality of the concept of art in the sense (1), according to which the acknowledgment of art status to any object of the past *depends on* the mastery of the present concept itself. However, that is a problem, because according to the conceptual definition of art proposed by Levinson the content of the present concept of art depends on what art *has been* in the past[18], that is to say something whose historical *difference*, in the strong sense (2), either we cannot establish, for epistemic limits, or we have no need to ascertain, for conceptual irrelevance.

2. What does come before the definition?

This problem rises another question: how do we come to grasp «our» modern concept of art? To what extent can we call it 'our?? Levinson seem to assume here that we should just observe a *state of affair*, but the things are not so simple. In first place, it is not properly obvious that the works of the so-called Avant-garde artists in the 20th century have radically modify the concept of art to such an extent that the past conceptions «no longer seem remotely adequate to the nature and range of what have been accounted artworks in the past hundred years or so» (p. 27). But, 'accounted' by whom? And by what authority?[19] Nor can we take for granted that the «more radical activities of

[18] In the words of the author: «whether something is art now depends, and ineliminably, on what has been art in the past» (p. 13).

[19] In the essay *Hume's Standard of Taste: The Real Problem*, Levinson offers reasons for giving credit to 'ideal' critics about the higher artistic value of certain works. It is impossible to discuss here in detail this important paper, but for our present purpose at least two observations are in order. 1) While for Levinson arthood in general is not defined in terms of intrinsic value qualities, the superior arthood (the relative axiological value) is conceived in terms of the capacity to arouse qualitative aesthetic experiences (pp. 379-382), whom the ideal

Conceptual artists […] seemed to establish that art *per se* had no need even of any concrete object» (p. 29). In fact, these authors have established nothing cogent, at least unless we can make sure in a preliminary way that their operations are actually pertaining to art history, that is unless we can establish that their works are actually artworks. Unfortunately, this is not a matter of fact, which we should just record, nor is it an intuitive elementary evidence, something like what Boethius called *propositiones per se notae*. But then, how could we decide? Perhaps because we read so in some art-history textbooks? Or because some museum curators think so? In this way, we would end up subscribing to an institutional theory, that is a postulatory theory, which in any case Levinson himself has rightly refuted.

It is a formal fault to assert that the conceptual definition of art should take account of the revolutionary outputs of the Avant-garde *art*. To avoid the *quaternio terminorum*, first of all we should warrant a pre-definitional or pre-theoretical identification. In fact, the epistemic purpose of a rigorous definition is also to establish *if* certain objects *can* or *cannot* be art, beyond controversial opinions. The problem is not new nor easy, from Plato's *Meno* to Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*: to define X we have to know what counts as X, but without a definition we cannot correctly identify all the Xs. There is no room here to add more, but it is not clear what position Levinson takes about this problem.

Be that as it may, we cannot take for granted a common opinion, even if sustained by 'experts'. First, because experts should exhibit and explain reasons, when requested, which are sharable by non-experts as well, and this is not surely the case. Second, a conception is

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critics would go through better than others. However, Levinson doesn't seem willing to infer that the arthood of *any* artistic object could be defined according to a degree of that kind of qualitative value. 2) As for the difficulty posed by Hume's thesis – how can you identify an ideal critic? – the answer of Levinson relies on a previous and independent identification of supreme masterworks, universally recognized, whom the ideal critics would be able to appreciate more fully than others, thus earning the title to authoritatively judge works of a comparable value but less universally undisputed. Nevertheless, Levinson doesn't explain if and how we can *verify* when someone has really appreciated a masterwork fully enough (or more fully) to be considered an ideal critic, without mistakes or boasts about presumed abilities. Is it to be established by an ideal critic of ideal critics? And by reasons accessible to non-ideal critics too, or through an even more rare sensibility? In any case, it seems difficult to say that the most radical works of contemporary Avant-garde are supreme or paradigmatic masterworks which passed the 'test of time', in the sense of Levinson.

not necessarily correct only because is common. When we talk about 'our' conception of art – to avoid what Floyd Allport called 'illusion of universality of opinions' – we should not conflate a descriptive genetic-psychological level and a prescriptive one. Does the 'current' or 'ordinary' concept of art explain how people actually tend to classify certain objects or rather how people *should* classify them? It is by no means sure that, through an empirical test, 'ordinary' intuitions about the classification of contemporary art would turn out to be so much convergent. Not to mention that, as psychologists know well, many people, including experts, not always conceptualize objects in a consequential or consistent way.

Therefore, if we want to give *normative* force to the definition of art we cannot settle for either an institutional solution or a doxastic-statistical sociological survey, for there is no one single conception of art, now less than ever, which 'emerges' as self-evident. Unless, we should add, one wants to believe in a kind of *Zeitgeist*, whose epochal symptoms are to be divined and which guarantees the 'right' interpretation of the direction taken by History (of Art). But that amounts to believing in a «robust historicism of a Hegelian or Dantoesque sort», that is just the kind of historicism from which Levinson wishes to dissociate his own theory (p. 13).

3. Basic definitions and recursive definitions

The problem of the ultimate foundation is a crucial one. Levinson specifies that his «basic definition of art» – meant to capture «our present concept» – is not properly a recursive one, although «the full *extension* of art in a given tradition might be displayed by a recursive definition» (p. 15). The distinction is appropriate, for a recursive – and not simply circular – definition needs a base clause that is independent of the recursive rule. But, then, what is exactly the difference between the recursive definition and the *non-recursive* definition ('one-step') which operate together in Levinson's theory? The answer is not easy, because we have, on the one hand, the sociological survey, so to speak, of the *use* a given community makes of the term 'art' (covering with it conceptual works and the like), use which, however, does not amount to a definition. On the other hand, we have the for-

mal definition proposed by Levinson, which actually *is* a recursive definition[20].

In his earlier essays, Levinson tried to sidestep the charge of circularity suggesting that the *intension* of 'art' at the time *t* is to be «explicated» in terms of the *extension* of 'art' (and of ways it is or was correctly regarded) prior to *t*, so that the concept is definable without presupposing it (DA, p. 15; RA, p. 50). Nevertheless, it is not easy to see how we could know the real extension of 'art', that is the range of its proper application, without presupposing what is to be applied, all the more because 'art', for the reasons examined above, cannot be other than «our present concept». Thus, it is even tautological that all the objects included within the retrospective extension of the concept share *ex hypothesi* its intension, irrespective of their temporal or historical location. Only, in this way it is difficult to understand where is the 'irreducible historicality of the concept'.

Clearly, however, Levinson cannot do without recursivity, for it allows to attain the maximum of formal abstractness for his theory, thus subsuming under one and the same concept also the most radical *trouvailles* of the contemporary Avant-garde trends. But, as he first has pointed out, any recursive structure ends with a *ne ultra*, which is a critical point for a theory aiming to be purely relational, without any substantive-qualitative element. Hence the thorny collocation of the so-called ur-art, with which the whole process of intentional-retrospective reference ceases and from which all the artforms of the tradition descend. 'Thorny', for it is precisely the final and original element to fix the *identity* of the genealogic relation and to differentiate it from any other formally similar recursion, real or possible. Just to take an example suggested by Levinson himself (RA, p. 49), you can identify the progeny of Charlemagne, and individuate its members, distinguishing it from other progenies, only if, soon or later, you can substantially identify Charlemagne.

Levinson's most recent proposal to solve the problem, however, seems not completely in keeping with the anti-substantialism of his basic theory. He distinguishes between ur-art – «the ultimate *non-art* progenitors of artworks in that tradition» (p. 18, italics mine) – and

[20] In his last synthetic formulation: «something is art if it is or was intended or projected for overall regard as some prior art is or was correctly regarded» (p. 13).

first art, that is the first generation of works definable as art by virtue of the recursive definition. But the distinction is somewhat far-fetched, for the objects of both ur-art and first art are equally intentional artifacts and equally involve the *same* kind of regard (let us call it *r*): the only difference is that the r_0 of the ur-art is not linked to any predecessor, whereas this is obviously the case with the r_1 of the first art. Then, we have to deduce that the first artist is guided by the intention that his own work elicit an identical (or similar enough?) *r* as the *r* of the ur-works, but not because these works exhibit intrinsic qualitative properties deserving a specific appreciation, for, if so, we should include in the definition a condition of substantiality which would threaten the theory's pretension of a purely 'non-qualitative' definition. Therefore, the recursive reference of the first artist is defined and determined only by the *retrospective form* of the reference itself, not by its *content*, so that, somehow paradoxically, the first artist either has no reason to refer to certain objects instead of others or his own preferences are definitionally irrelevant. In fact, why should just *certain* ur-works elicit such an interest unless for an intrinsic special quality which is positively attractive thus arousing a distinct kind of *r*? It is not easy to understand how the recursive process could start in the first place, on purely formal conditions.

Similar difficulties concern also the proposal of a disjunctive definition accounting for the peculiar position of proto-arts. According to this definition «something is art iff either (a) it satisfies the basic definition or (b) it is an instance of first art – that is, one of those things from which all other art, that satisfying the basic definition, springs» (p. 18). But why should first art appear in the second disjunct, since it regularly satisfies the conditions of (a), as it seems clear enough? One might think that the condition (b) holds rather for ur-art, but perhaps Levinson realized that this option would be in contradiction with the assumption that ur-arts are only «the ultimate non-art progenitors» of the subsequent tradition. Anyway, the definition of (b) puts forward a solution which Levinson himself should judge «not acceptable» (ibid. n. 15), *i.e.* the *retroactive* attribution of art status to first art, in the light of what has happened after its production: as if we said that first art is art only because a subsequent

tradition recursively refers to (or 'springs' from) it, and this tradition is artistic because ultimately refers to that very first art[21].

4. Form vs substance. How many concepts of art are there?

The project of de-substantializing the concept of art rises some perplexities also when we come to the issue of the trans-cultural and trans-historical categorization, which is again both an epistemic and conceptual problem. Levinson discusses here the case of imaginary alien civilizations, living before the human era, but it is clear that the same may hold for more realistic cases. The key question is: how can we classify an *allegedly* artistic production that is not historically and intentionally connected with the tradition we call 'art' (or we should call so by normative definition)? An abrupt reply could simply be that without such conditions the alien productions are not classifiable as art, whatever else they may be or have been. However, with great intellectual honesty, Levinson tries to give a more satisfactory and comprehensive answer, which in turn, nevertheless, highlights further questions. Indeed, we should ask in the first place what leads us to *presume* to classify *certain* objects, even if alien, *in relation* to our tradition, to such an extent that we have to «liberalize» it just for this purpose (p. 20). There is no explicit answer, but perhaps it is possible to guess why.

Levinson allows that aliens could have had an autonomous tradition formally similar to our own, but acknowledges that this would be not enough to individuate a sufficient connection between the two independent traditions. The only point of contact would thus consist in the possibility that the alien objects have been intentionally produced for a kind of regard coinciding, if only *per accidens*, with the re-

[21] Levinson denies that the notions of first art and ur-art «are elements in our concept of art» (p. 15) or in the «judgement that something is an artwork» (DA, p. 21). Again, it is not so clear what is meant here with 'our concept', but, in any case, the fact remains that the definitional concept of art, in its disjunctive formulation too, must necessarily cover also the instances of first art and ur-art, unless we want to break the recursive chain which identify the tradition. Even if the recursive extension did not include properly the ur-art and extended only to its descendants, its notion should be implied in the content of the concept at any rate, in the same way as the concept 'descendant of Charlemagne', even referring to all the descendants except for the progenitor, would be not definitionally intelligible if 'Charlemagne' were not grasped in the intension of the concept itself. The concept 'descendant of Charlemagne' is not the same as the concept, say, 'descendant of Charles the Bald', although the set denoted by the two concepts is partially coextensive.

gard which is actually normative for our art history. By virtue of this 'extended' theory, we may legitimately call the alien production '*art*', although the concept here is to be understood «in a stripped-down, form-and-function-based sense not equivalent to the sense we operate with at present» (p. 21). In any case, the fact remains that «insofar as anything outside our art tradition is properly said to fall under our concept of art, it is because we can appropriately *relate* it to our tradition of art» (ibid.), but then we should also acknowledge that the relation between '*art*' and 'art', since it is not a historical-intentional one, will necessarily be of conceptual order, and the coincidence – or, better, the identity – between **r** and *r* cannot be a simply formal-relational identity but must be a substantial-qualitative identity. Again, there is an unresolved tension between what can fall under «our concept of art» and the radical difference *postulated* between this subsumption and «the sense we operate with at present». For Levinson, alien *art* could even be «some non-historicist predecessor of our current concept of art» (p. 20), thus, strange to say, it would be more closely similar to our concept 'prior to the early twentieth century' than the latter is to our concept post-1920.

Then, can one really do without any qualitative notion? Surely it is not enough to appeal to 'demonstrative' or 'paradigmatic' references. It is not a viable solution to intentionally individuate the ways an artwork is or has been correctly regarded just pointing something out and saying «as those things are properly regarded» (p. 25). But what 'thing', exactly? Within what boundaries? Even in the apparently most simple cases, for instance the *Mona Lisa* of Leonardo, when someone says 'that', what should we mean by 'that'? Does it include also the frame, the material support, the title, the representational content, the intentions of Leonardo, something else? «Those» are things to be *regarded* in very different ways. As Aristotle says, one cannot prove essential nature «by pointing with the finger» (Post. Anal. 92a).

In Levinson's opinion, the maker of an artwork «need not possess a substantive concept of what an artwork is», nor does he need a theory «*à la* Danto» (p. 34). However, the point is not that an artmaker, *qua* artmaker, should posses such a concept (or, for that matter, a more formal-relational concept whatsoever), but, nevertheless, a

substantive concept is necessary in order to identify art in conceptually normative terms, no matter who makes the judgment, be it philosopher, artist, or layman. Indeed, conversely, if no one possessed such a concept the class 'art' could actually be empty and we could never know it. Levinson worries that such an admission would threaten the art status of the most radical conceptual works, but, except for our deference to the institutional practices of museums and art market, there is no conceptual or phenomenological constraint preventing us from saying, to paraphrase Hegel: 'so much the worse for the conceptual works'!

The outstanding work of Levinson makes clear that our modern tradition tries to put together two different conceptions of art, one that is largely trans-historical and trans-cultural, to such an extent to be even compatible with imaginary alien creations, and the other one that is viable, more or less *ad hoc*, only for contemporary Avant-garde trends. Rather than supposing a radical historical transformation, in the strong sense, of one and the same concept referring to very different things – by no means an easy operation, as we have seen – it is perhaps more economic to think of radical different things that need not be subsumed under one single concept, even if, by an irreducibly historical accident, they share one single name.

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ON THE IRREDUCIBLE AESTHETIC COMPONENT IN LEVINSON'S THEORIES ON ART

While comprising a considerable number of essays spanning over a period of (more or less) ten years and concerning different philosophical topics, Jerrold Levinson's *Contemplating Art* (hereafter, CA) reveals a remarkable coherence, in employing a limited set of principles in contexts as various as that of the definition of art, the nature of aesthetic properties, the debate on musical expressivity, the interpretative/critical activity of perceivers, and other more circumscribed matters. The recurring, underlying ideas I'm thinking of include intentionalism (as regards both the definition and the interpretation of artworks), the notion of musical persona, and realism about aesthetic

properties. But there's another idea that, despite being usually ignored by commentators, plays a no less relevant role in shaping Levinson's aesthetic thought. I'm talking of the coalescence (i.e., fusion, interconnectedness, mutual appropriateness, and so on) of form and content (hereafter, I'll refer to it as CFC). My aim then will be twofold: in the first place, I'll point out and analyse the passages of CA where this paradigmatic aesthetic principle explicitly occurs; secondly, I'll show how CFC, as is there articulated, can disclose interesting perspectives on other aspects of Levinson's theories about art and aesthetic properties.

The first reference to CFC is in Ch. 3 (*Emotion in Response to Art*), where Levinson discusses some of the paradoxes that our emotional engagement with art raises. Facing the problem of the well-known paradox of negative emotion in art, Levinson ranks, among the best explanations of why people usually are not afraid of, and sometimes deliberately seek out, artworks (such as tragedies) that arouse in them emotions such as shame, grief, sorrow, remorse, and so on, the so-called 'organicist' explanation, according to which negative emotions elicited by artworks become a source of satisfaction when appreciated as «an essential element [...] appropriately raised» in the «formal, narrative and dramatic structure» of the work, and so as contributing to the total experience of the work as an organic whole (CA, pp. 52-53). A second, even if more oblique, manifestation of CFC is in Ch. 7 (*Nonexistent Artforms and the Case of Visual Music*). The question Levinson faces here concerns the field of all possible artforms, including nonexistent ones. What is noteworthy, from our point of view, is, firstly, that he appeals to formal impulses – being they on the order of juxtaposition, fusion, or transformation of some existing arts – to explain the emergence of new artforms; and, secondly, that «new formal combinations» find their artistic *raison d'être* in making it possible to express what «weren't possible before», or in «embodying moral social attitudes» and «advancing social claims that hadn't been open to us» (CA, p. 119). What lies at the heart of the failure of the (possible) art of visual music («an art of abstract colour film [...] comparable to music», CA, p. 120), is, indeed, its limited structural potentiality (e.g., there not being, in the chromatic spectrum, something analogous to tonal relations of tension and release, consonance and dissonance, cadence and closure, and so on), which

sensibly reduces its expressive and semantic resources (because lacking the emotional qualities that such relations produce).

The essay where CFC is most straightforwardly deployed is *Evaluating Music* (Ch. 10), when Levinson, after having rejected the identification of the artistic value of a work of music with the intrinsic value of the experience that the work, properly understood, offers, goes in search of some mid-level principles (i.e., principles which are more general than features concerning the attractiveness of melodies or rhythmic/harmonic inventiveness, but more particular than the appeal to the inherent rewardingness of musical experience itself) which could support the latter, this being, at any rate, the primary source of goodness in music. And what these principles amount to is «a particular wedding» of «configurational/kinetic form» and «expressive/interpretive content», the «fusion» of the «how it goes» of music (the moment-to-moment evolution of its structure) with «what it conveys» (in terms of suggestions of human gesture, feelings and agency) being more appreciable and satisfying than following music and responding to music's expressive aspect, when these are experienced separately (CA, pp. 198-200). But Levinson goes a step further, and states that, given that content itself admits of a «how it goes» component – i.e., the pattern of succession of the expressive episodes/characters which a piece of music conveys – and so generates an additional dimension of content (which he labels «dramatic»), such a relation between form and content can be realized at a «higher level», so getting very close to artistic value *tout court*, as the name Levinson assigns to it («global significant form/immanent content») signals, and as demonstrated in his convincing analysis of how the Schubert's *Piano Sonata in A major* can achieve, through such a «transcendent unity», a «transfiguring» dimension with respect to the listener (CA, pp. 200-207).

Considerations of this kind are not restricted to musical field. Talking about the difference between erotic and pornographic pictures (Ch. 15), Levinson maintains that, while both are intended to stimulate sexually the viewer, the former also aim at satisfying an artistic interest, inviting him/her to «contemplate the relationship» between the «erotic content of the image» and the «vehicle» employed to achieve the stimulation, i.e., its formal (as well as expressive, dramatic, social, and so on) aspects (CA, p. 263). Otherwise put, in erotic

art the form/vehicle is, in some measure, opaque – whereas transparency of medium is a necessary condition of pornography –, and this is why we relish paintings such as Ingres's *Turkish Bath* or Courbet's *The Origin of the World*, without going beyond the state of stimulation that they inevitably generate (CA, pp. 268-270).

The fourth part of the book (Chs. 16-18) is devoted to the topic of literary interpretation. Here, Levinson defends the view of hypothetical intentionalism, according to which «the core meaning of a literary work is given by the best hypothesis, from the position of an appropriately informed, sympathetic, and discriminating reader, of authorial intent to convey such and such to an audience through the text in question» (CA, p. 302). This leaves room for multiplicity of interpretations of a literary work – there being various, even if not indefinite, individually justifiable readings, which can eventually be combined in an integrated whole – and for the existence of a residue of non-paraphrasability, due to the «the inseparability of content and form» which is most evident in metaphor, whose «imagistic force» derives from the «specific feel of the words employed», form their «precise rhythms, resonances, and prosodic properties» (CA, pp. 296-297). And even in those cases, such as humorous artworks (Ch. 23), where inappropriateness, in the form of «incongruity» (that is, of «non-fittingness of items or elements one to another») plays a crucial role in engendering amusement, still an aspect of congruity and fittingness has to be perceived: only grasping «the 'why' of the incongruity» and solving the puzzle it poses (though in a «relatively effortless way»), we can get the «amusement of a higher order» that the best humorous works are likely to offer, and that comes close to aesthetic pleasure, as elsewhere defined by Levinson as the gratification we derive from our focusing on the relation between «what a work represents or expresses or suggests, and the means it uses to do so» (this relation being itself «kind of higher form»)[22].

The idea of an «intimacy between form and content in art» is not, as Levinson admits, a novel one in the history of aesthetics; he traces it back to Croce, Collingwood and Dewey (CA, p. 200n). We can surely add to this list Kant (for his notion of adherent beauty) and

[22] J. Levinson, *The Pleasures of Aesthetics* (hereafter, POA), Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 10.

Beardsley (for the coexistence, in the triadic criterion of aesthetic/artistic value he offers, of formal properties such as unity and complexity along with content-oriented ones such as the intensity of human regional qualities); it is possible to find instances of CFC also in the writings of contemporary analytical philosophers, such as Danto (who, in turn, refers to the use Hegel made of it), Budd and Eldridge. The ways Levinson works out this principle, while testifying to its relevance in current aesthetical debates, also suggests further, interesting developments. Most notable is the fact that if we extend CFC, as articulated in *Evaluating Music*, to the other artforms, we are prompted to support the existence of an upper level of aesthetic supervenience, which would qualify the relation between beauty (as synonymous with excellence and other merit-terms) and the underlying aesthetic properties; the former being the product of the fusion of an artwork's expressive form and dramatic content, which can be equated respectively with formal and non-formal aesthetic properties (i.e., with the ordered interaction between expressive and semantic properties, which in turn gain further intensity from their organic cooperation)[23]. This possibility was envisaged by Levinson in the second additional note to his paper of 1983 devoted to this topic – where he labelled the emergence-relation between aesthetic evaluations and aesthetic properties (in addition to the standard one, that between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties) as «aesthetic value supervenience»[24] – and later developed extensively by Nick Zangwill in his pyramidal view of aesthetic properties[25].

Deployed as it is in various aspects of Levinson's aesthetic thought, CFC seems to find no place in his intentional-historical definition of art except as the ultimate resource to which border-line cases – i.e., objects or events created outside the connective web of conscious intentional backward references to integral sets of acknowledged ways of art-regards – can appeal to obtain the status of arthood. Such are the cases of primitive art, non-western art traditions, aesthetically pleasing industrial artifacts, and works springing

[23] For a detailed analysis of this parallelism see my *Due livelli di sopravvenienza estetica*, «Aesthetica Preprint, Supplementa» 23 (2009), pp. 155-177.
[24] J. Levinson, *Music, Art and Metaphysics* (hereafter, MAM), Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press, 1990, pp. 157-8.
[25] See his *Metaphysics of Beauty*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2001.

from unconscious or self-contradictory intentions (such as Kafka's novels *The Trial* and *The Castle*). To legitimate their art status, it can be necessary, as Levinson admits, to take in consideration substantive, instead of purely relational, features on the order of «the amount of care evident in the handling of details, the degree of attention to form […] the sense of a statement being made, or an attitude expressed» (POA, p. 170), the «exceptional potential [artistic] value» (MAM, p. 57), which, taken together, approximate to CFC. But here lies an asymmetry that, as I see it, can lead to paradoxical effects. Indeed, what if all the would-be artworks produced in recent times would pass the test for arthood (MAM, pp. 58-59) just meeting its first and basic condition, that is, in virtue of revealing a purposive orientation on the part of the maker through their «outward face» and «context of creation», including artist's pronouncement and journal's reviews (MAM, p. 43)? We would be surrounded by a myriad of artworks entering the realm of the 'official' world of art with the help of no more than a well elaborated historical narrative, irrespective of their actual power of arousing experiences as valuable as that produced by some paradigmatic artworks to which they have been linked by some skillful critic; whereas our quest for quality could be satisfied (let alone past artworks) only with works of commercial/instrumental, remote (geographically and temporally), naïve, or 'indie' art. This is not an improbable scenario: look at what happened in the field of visual arts, where genuine aesthetic value has been constantly overwhelmed by socio-economical values imposed by the art system. I see no other way to invert this trend than to put, at the core of the definition of art, what plays, as I hope to have shown here through Levinson's insights, such an irreplaceable role in our understanding and appreciation of art: the aesthetic principle of the coalescence of form and content (CFC). I know Levinson would be reluctant to follow this path, given that he explicitly distances himself from a similar proposal, that forwarded by Richard Eldridge who stated that what is necessary and sufficient for a thing's being classified as an artwork is its possession of a «satisfying appropriateness to one another of a thing's form and content»[26]. But this seems to me the

[26] R. Eldridge, *Form and Content: An Aesthetic Theory of Art*, in Neill, Ridley (eds.), *The Philosophy of Art. Readings Ancient and Modern*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1995, p. 246.

most promising account of the notion of art; one that sheds light on artistic practices, from both their productive and receptive side, and that can be thought of as stemming from the same empirical ground that directed Levinson towards his search for a definition of art, namely, the fact that there is «a deeper continuity in the development of art than is generally noted» (MAM, p. 18).

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ON THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN THE DEFINITION OF ART

Cast the first stone those who, being involved in the field of aesthetics and philosophy of art, have never felt sheepish when required to answer the naïve question (yet, alas, quite provocative): 'what-is-exactly-the-purpose-of-your-work?'. Actually, it seems far from clear why anyone interested in art should worry about what aestheticians and philosophers say in this regard. Most people are spontaneously attracted to art as a source of emotions and cultural satisfaction, but this is not sufficient reason for them to be equally interested in the *philosophy* of art. And in fact, people are usually not. So skepticism concerning the significance of the whole enterprise of the philosophy of art should not surprise us. In most cases, though not always, it coincides with a more general suspiciousness of the utility of philosophy *tout court*. The issue is, in a nutshell, why should common people need philosophers' opinions at all – *especially* in the field of art where, in more than just one trivial sense, it is all a matter of taste or, if you will, of educated taste.

Jerrold Levinson's *Contemplating Art* may supply embarrassed philosophers with a good source of arguments to be brandished in case of need. The brilliant yet straightforward language of all 24 essays in this book makes it accessible to a large audience, including non-expert readers**,** yet it won't disappoint the *connoisseurs* in search of philosophical thoroughness and insight. Levinson' s expertise in philosophy goes hand in hand with his passion for an acquaintance with different art genres, from cinema to painting, from electro-acoustic music to classical symphonies, so as to make this collection a

successful example of how well philosophical argumentation and aesthetic sensitivity can sometimes coexist.

One of the virtue of this collection is undoubtedly the thematic cohesion of its various sections which, in any case, explore a wide range of very different philosophical topics (music, pictures, history, Aesthetic Properties, among the others). This cohesion is guaranteed by the presence of *Leitmotive* in the dialectical advancement of Levinson's aesthetical reflection, developed (as in the best analytical tradition) in the constant dialogue with his opponents and critics.

1. Aesthetic contextualism versus aesthetic isolationism

In this paper I shall discuss only one of the possible *fils rouge* that can be discovered in *Contemplating Art*'s numerous essays; as a disclaimer, I should explain that this implies only a partial reading of the book, thus I drop any claim of thoroughness in advance.

My idea is that the variety of themes in the book, together with the remarkable profusion in examples always taken from actual artworks and art practices assumes an even greater significance if read in the light of an underlying principle which, at least in my view, plays a key role in the entire work of our author. I'm referring here to the importance Levinson attributes to the function of context for a proper understanding of art.

What I will focus on therefore, is Levinson's adhesion to what it has been called aesthetic contextualism. As noted by Melvin Rader as long ago as 1947, most philosophies of art, and *mutatis mutandis*, many contemporary aesthetic theories, can be classified in the opposing factions of contextualim and isolationism: in this respect, Levinson admittedly stands with the former.

Aesthetic isolationism can be described as the idea according to which the norms influencing the definition, the meaning and the evaluation of a work of art are not independent of the work as an art object, but internal to it. The art object possesses determinate aesthetic values in virtue of its having certain intrinsic qualities, independent of its socio-historical or cultural situation.

Aesthetic contextualism on the other hand rejects the idea of works of art being completely self-determined objects whose value depends merely on some work-inherent qualities. Conversely, contextualism claims that works of art are particular historically en-

trenched artifacts that can be completely understood only when contextual background factors are taken into consideration. According to contextualists, isolationism – both in its formalist and empiricist version – should be in discarded, since various features of the artistic, historical and social context in which the work was created and appreciated contribute to a large extent to the work's identity.

Roots of the isolationist approach may be traced back to Kant's idea of the aesthetic judgment being necessarily characterized by a kind of disinterested interest, achievable only by focusing on the perceptible, non-relational, features of the aesthetic object itself.

Only if produced by the internal features of the object can aesthetic pleasure be truly disinterested; thus, works of art are to be evaluated for their formal attributes and their inner content alone, rather than by the external context of their provenance and creation. In the wake of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, a whole tradition of aesthetic isolationist approaches has developed, e.g. structuralism, empiricism, representationalism, against which contextualism fights.

2. The intentional-historical definition of art

Levinson's intentional-historical definition, initially formulated in 1979 and defended against various objections in *Contemplating Art*'s first two papers, builds the foundation for a definition of contextualism which may summed up in the slogan: 'No work is an island'. The key idea is that no properties of an object can univocally determine the concept of art, since this: «also depends on an historical relationship, that is, the relationship between the artist and his historical past, his practice and consolidated tradition»; thus, art-hood is not an intrinsic property of a thing: «but rather a matter of being related in the right way to human activity and thought».Such a relation is in turn specified in terms of the intentions of an independent individual, the artist, where the intentions refer to the history of art. Levinson's position makes appeal to the intentionality of the author. The purpose of the definition is quite clear: Levinson's work highlights the apparently commonsensical, yet too often undervalued, assumption that art is intrinsically related to its history. Thus, the context Levinson is referring to is constituted *strict sensu* by the history of art and the practice of art alone.

A work of art is a thing intended for regard-as-a-work-of-art-regard in any of the ways works of art existing prior to it have been appropriately regarded. We are accounting for what it is for an object to be art at a given time by reference to the body of past art: «The gist of the intentional-historical conception of art that I advocate is this: something is art if it is or was intended or projected for overall regard as some prior art is or was correctly regarded». The motives behind Levinson's theory are conveyed in his rejection of both the isolationist (either empiricist or formalist) theories and the institutional theories: just as art cannot be defined by simply making appeal to its intrinsic features, neither can it be considered solely as the product of a series of social circumstances:

> The intentional-historical conception of art differs from the art-theoretical and social-institutional ones, though, in positing as the crucial contextual condition of art-hood not a relation to some prevailing artistic theory, nor a relation to a surrounding social institution, but a relation to the concrete history of art-making and art-projection into which the candidate objects hopes to enter.

Note, on the other hand, that Levinson's remarking the irreducible yet *minimal* historicality of the concept of art can serve to distinguish his position from more drastically historicist perspectives such as those of a Hegelian sort, whose possible relativistic consequences he clearly foresees.

3. Levinson's contextualism

Levinson's form of contextualism thus maintains that works do not possess explicit aesthetic properties, artistic meanings, or determinate ontological identity outside the general context of the art-history to which the works belong. This has consequences for how we can have a proper experience, and subsequently a correct understanding and evaluation of the work.Accordingly, it is the intentional-historical context that makes artworks what they really are, *but* (and this, it seems, is the central point here) such context is not external to the art object: the object intrinsically possesses certain relational properties. Therefore, if Levinson's thesis is correct, the intentional-historical features alone constitute the necessary identity conditions of a work of art.

It may be worth noting here that by formulating and defending his view against its main objections (accusations of recursivity, anthropocentricity, ethnocentrism) Levinson is accounting only for the domain of works of art. One might be tempted, instead, to further extend Levinson's contextualist view to encompass the whole realm of artifacts. Such a move, however, prompts exactly the criticism Levinson addresses to the psychologist Paul Bloom, whose proposal is indeed to apply intentional-historical definitions to artifacts of all kinds-chairs, umbrellas, and so on. Bloom's idea is that all artifacts are created with a precise kind of intention and it is by recognizing this initial intention that we are able to understand them. Just as we need to trace relations to episodes of the history of art and art's tradition to appreciate whether a particular object is art, the same can be said with respect to ordinary artifacts. If we consider the concept of 'chair', for instance, we may note that our understanding of it includes entities that have been successfully created with the intention that they belong to the same category as current and previous chairs.

But, Levinson remarks, such an assimilation is in fact misplaced. According to Levinson, the specificity of artworks should be preserved against all reductionist attempts to align art products with craft products: «Suppose that Bloom is right, and that an analysis of the sort that captures what is to be an artwork also captures what is to be an artifact of any sort. What if anything, would remain of the *special* historicality of the concept of artworks, as opposed to those of chair, pencil, house or other standard artifacts?» since, he concludes few pages later, «what is special about the artifact concept *artwork*, one might say, is that it is a *wholly* relational one; it is more like those of *observed thing* or *beloved object* or *prize winner* than it is like those of standard artifacts, such as chair or cup or cabin, for which there are at least minimal conditions of form […]».

4. Between essentialism and historical relativism

Note that Levinson's identifying works of art as *wholly relational* concepts it is not something that can go unnoticed, at least for anyone committed to the ontology of art. If works of art are intentionally dependent entities, how can they be at the same time real things with an ontological identity? It may seem that if the concept of artwork is intentionally-historically defined, then the ontological status of the

work of art is not graspable before and independently of the use we make of the relevant concepts and germane artistic practices. Levinson maintains that nothing is an artwork *in itself* but only according to specific human intentions relating to an artistic tradition. To the extent that artworks are essentially historically embedded objects, that neither have definite status nor clear aesthetic properties apart from the generative contexts in which they arise, it follows that anything can be a work of art as long as it relates in the right way to that narrative dimension we call the 'history of art'. Therefore, one may conclude that there would be nothing to find out about works besides what our artistic practices in themselves determine.

But then how can Levinson avoid the risk of falling back into conventionalism's pitfalls, that is, denying that art has essential connection to aesthetic properties, or to formal properties, or to expressive properties, or to any type of property taken by traditional definitions to be essential to art while being a 'realist'? How can he hold that kind of even weak objectivity he is referring to when writing: «the objectivity for aesthetic properties defended in this essay is not one that accords them a transcendent status, independent of human reactions[…]»?

Levinson's philosophical path, I suggest, is characterized by a constant attempt to avoid several potential pitfalls that threaten philosophies of art that are too chauvinist: *essentialism*, on the one hand, the idea that artworks have a predetermined nature, an 'essence', completely independent of social and historical factors; and *historical relativism*, on the other hand, the idea that artworks, like all other cultural objects, are the result of socio-historical forces and therefore do not possess any autonomous reality. Of course the claim that works of art have a fixed nature just like other natural objects is too naïve a metaphysical assumption to be taken seriously. If it is true that works of art are not independent from the concepts we have of them and from our thoughts and practices, there is still no reason to think that they do not possess a particular nature *qua* artworks. This is to say that a knowledge of art history is fundamental to a correct understanding of art. Nonetheless, we may still want to concede that art history concerns entities with a specific ontological identity. Levinson's idea is that it is not possible to decide whether something is a work of art just by considering its intrinsic features, as isolationists

maintain, since works have an inescapable intentional-historical character. But the necessarily intentional character of works of art does not imply that they lack a specific nature. Works of art depend ontologically on human intentions, since this is their way of existence *qua* works of art. Yet this is not to say that they are nothing more than practices and concepts.

What Levinson's tries to teach us is that it is not necessary to choose between essentialism and historical relativism, since they are eventually compatible and both indispensable to a correct understanding of what works of art are.

If contemplating art is to amount to understanding art, Levinson implies, then it must always involve, to some extent, contextualizing it.

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CONTEMPLATING *CONTEMPLATING ART*: REPLY TO COMMENTATORS

I wish first of all to thank my four commentators for having taken *Contemplating Art* as seriously as they have and for trying to make a modicum of sense of it. That was not easy to do given that the book is a collection of essays, and a somewhat heterogeneous one at that. Two of my commentators solved this problem by narrowing their focus to just one of the topics that loom large in *Contemplating Art*; in the case of Alessandro Bertinetto, the topic of musical expression, and in the case of Michele Di Monte, the topic of the definition of art. My other two commentators solved the problem by looking the heterogeneity of *Contemplating Art* straight in the face and then uncovering some underlying principles or themes or leitmotifs in it; in the case of Lisa Giombini, that of aesthetic contextualism, and in the case of Filippo Focosi, that of the relationship of form and content.

Let me begin my remarks with Focosi's suggestion that the relationship of form and content is a leitmotif of my aesthetic reflections. Focosi is certainly right to see that relationship as a pervasive feature of my thought about meaning and value in art. And he is also right to note that I nonetheless decline, in my definition of art, to make the existence or the character of that relationship a condition of arthood.

On the one hand, as Focosi well knows, my intentional-historical definition of art is meant as an explication of the descriptive category of art, or alternatively, of our current practice of classifying things as either art or non-art. And so that which is admittedly central to the value of an artwork, or that on which its appreciation as art properly focuses, is not thereby something properly included in a definition of art whose aim is classificatory, is not thereby that which marks off artworks from other things, whether artifacts or natural objects. On the other hand, Focosi is right that I acknowledge the relevance of something like the centrality of a concern with the form-content relation in the case of certain borderline phenomena, such as aesthetically compelling primitive artifacts or strikingly formed industrial objects, which seem to call for inclusion as art even though not satisfying the basic intentional-historical condition I posit as essential. But I think it is theoretically justified to confine that relevance to those borderline phenomena, rather than elevating it to a *sine qua non* for all artwork, given the increasing diversity and often pointedly anti-aesthetic impulse of art in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Consider next how Focosi characterizes the principle to which he claims I give regular allegiance, and which he designates as the *coalescence of form and content*, or CFC. Though there may be cases in which I would describe the relationship between form and content in a given work as a coalescence or fusion, I would not myself hold that to be a formula of general application. That is to say, I do not think that the form and the content of an artwork, even a successful artwork, necessarily *coalesce* or *fuse*, since that implies that the form and content are no longer separable or distinguishable, that the form and the content cannot to some extent be independently identified. But that implication is too strong. A principle of greater generality than CFC, and one to which I would more readily subscribe, would be that of *the interrelationship of form and content*, or IFC, the idea being that the specific relationship of form and content in an artwork is the primary locus of its value as art and the proper focus of artistic appreciation of it, whether that relationship in a given case and at a given level amounts to complete interpenetration of form and content or to something short of that.

I turn now to Giombini's sympathetic reconstruction of some of my views about art, and can agree that the aesthetic contextualism

she singles out for attention is even more of a leitmotif of my writings than the principle of the interrelation of form and content just discussed. (As she notes, I have even written an essay entitled *Aesthetic Contextualism*, published in 2007, and which will be reprinted in a forthcoming collection of essays, *Aesthetic Pursuits*). What I was most struck by in Giombini's commentary was her bringing out the affinity between the principle of aesthetic contextualism and the intentional-historical definition of art which I have defended, with modifications and qualifications, for thirty-five years now.

In light of Giombini's analysis one might well see the intentional-historical definition of art as a special application of the principle of aesthetic contextualism broadly construed, along the lines of the slogan that Giombini recalls, 'No work is an island'. Broadly construed, aesthetic contextualism about art holds that nothing of artistic significance about an artwork resides in its inherent form or perceptual appearance by themselves, but only in relation to the artistic context in which the work is embedded. The intentional-historical definition of art underlines the way in which the very *status as art* of an artwork depends on both its historical context in terms of past art and its intentional context in terms of the projections of a relevant agent, while aesthetic contextualism narrowly construed concerns the way in which the *artistic content* of an artwork depends crucially on its contextual relationships to other artworks both past and present. Both theses, then, are instances of aesthetic contextualism broadly construed, and though one might very well hold the second without holding the first, they clearly make very good, and quite natural, bedfellows. Finally, I can only applaud Giombini's convincing demonstration of the compatibility of a certain degree of both historical relativity and ontological essentialism in the theory of art, and would venture that these are perhaps even enjoined by a judicious embrace of aesthetic contextualism.

It is with pleasure that I now address Alessandro Bertinetto's careful commentary on some of the musical essays in *Contemplating Art,* since the aesthetics of music is the part of aesthetics closest to my heart, and begin by thanking him for drawing attention in a footnote to a number of musical essays composed after *Contemplating Art*, all of which figure in a forthcoming collection, *Musical Concerns*. I am also gratified that he finds so much to agree with in the views I have

put forward on musical expressiveness, musical performing, musical narrativity, and musical value.

Especially worthwhile is the Bertinetto's précis of my account of musical *expressiveness*, which locates such expressiveness in the susceptibility of much music to be heard, in virtue of its movement, as the *expression* of an emotion or other state of mind, and which thus implicates the hearing of an agent of such expression in the music, what I and others call a *persona*. I could hardly improve on that précis myself, and am glad to note Bertinetto's defense of the claim that expressiveness, though distinct from expression, cannot be understood without reference to it; the claim that an act of expression, whether real or imagined, logically requires an expressing agent, and that a gesture similarly requires a gesturer; and the claim that a persona theory of expressiveness is in no way incompatible with recognition of the culturally variable and grammatically governed aspect of the expression of emotions. I would only signal that it is preferable to think of the highly abstract and indeterminate agent of expression heard in expressive music as an *imaginary* rather than a *fictional* entity, since the notion of a fictional entity plausibly entails a framing intention or invitation to make-believe with a prop that, in contrast to a novel or film, is not normally present in connection with a piece of instrumental music.

Before leaving this topic I would draw attention to Bertinetto's resourceful replies to the putative difficulty for a persona theory of expression posed by music that appears expressive of something impersonal, superhuman, or cosmic. He convincingly suggests that either the expressiveness in such cases is still anchored in a *human* response, only one that is directed toward the impersonal, superhuman, or cosmic aspects of existence, or else that if the response is indeed attributable to a nonhuman agent, such as destiny or fate, such an agent must be to some extent *personalized* if we are to think of it as capable of expressing perspectives or states of mind.

Finally, I can only concur with Bertinetto's briefer but equally astute glosses on three other positions of mine staked out in other essays in *Contemplating Art*. The first concerns the impact that the perception or imagination of the *performing* gestures of musicians can have on the *musical* gestures heard in the music performed, and thus on the perceived expressiveness of such music. The second concerns

the way in which a persona theory of musical expressiveness, positing the gestures of an imagined subject hearable in music's movement, rather naturally generates the possibility, albeit a limited one, of narrative and dramatic content in music. And the third concerns the locating of music's main value in the quality of how it *goes* – how it unfolds over time, how it evolves from moment to moment – rather than in the quality of how it *sounds.* But Bertinetto plausibly proposes that this claim might best be restricted to music whose thrust is primarily linear and teleological – the vast bulk of music from the 17th to the 20th centuries – since perhaps not applicable to certain contemporary modes of music, such as ones of minimalist, spectral, trancelike, or freely improvisatory character, which arguably privilege the sonic surface of music over its sequential syntax.

I have left for last the commentary of Michele di Monte, the most critical of my commentators – though his criticism is of the best, that is to say, constructive, sort. In addressing those criticisms I return to the vexing yet unavoidable topic of art's definition. Di Monte's critical reflections are among the most searching my theory of art has elicited since its initial formulation and offering thirty-five years ago, and they have the additional merit of taking into account all four of the major essays in which that theory is advanced. I do my best in responding to them, though limitations of space and limitations in my understanding of some of his concerns keep my response from being quite what those reflections deserve.

I begin with Di Monte's pertinent questioning of the sense in which my account of arthood is a historical one. He quotes one of my formulations on this point, namely this: «whether something is art now depends, and ineliminably, on what has been art in the past» (= A), but also glosses it, in his own words, like this: «the content of the present concept of art depends on what art has been in the past» (= B). However, these are not equivalent. B is about *the content of the concept of art*, while A is about *what is necessary for something to be an artwork at a particular time*. So if there is something problematic about the definition's historicality understood as B, it is not something that need worry me. The historicality of arthood on which I do insist is captured by A, and is just the idea that having the status of arthood at a given time depends on what has that status at an earlier

time, rather than the idea that the content of the concept of art at a given time is provided by what count as artworks prior to that time.

Di Monte next raises the reasonable question of why in theorizing about art we should assume that what is proposed as art by any would-be artist of today actually is art, or alternatively, that anything a consensus of influential art critics recognize as art today in fact counts as art? I'm not sure I have an answer to that question, but I suppose I am willing to say, though I don't subscribe to a sociological theory of arthood, that widespread acceptance of items as artworks by the art-interested or art-informed – a broadly social fact – is a bedrock *datum* to which a theory of arthood, of what is art and what is not, must be adequate. A third issue broached by Di Monte is the putative recursive character of my definition of art. Di Monte claims that «the formal definition proposed by Levinson», according to which «something is art *iff* it is or was intended or projected for overall regard as some prior art is or was correctly regarded» (Contemplating Art, p. 13), «[...] actually *is* a recursive definition». Now although I did propose a recursive definition of art in my 1979 essay[27], that definition is not meant as an elucidation of our core concept of art, but only as a highly idealized representation of the extension of art, from first art to the present. As for my basic definition of art cited above, and which is meant to capture the core notion of art with which we now operate, it is not, *pace* Di Monte, a recursive definition as I understand that term. A strictly recursive definition of a domain posits a recursive structure for it that is expressed by an initial step and a recursive step; but there is no trace of such a two-step structure in the formal definition quoted by Di Monte from my 2002 essay on this topic[28]. Moreover, that basic 'one-step' definition, to which I am committed, does not require identification of that which is actually first art, does not even presuppose the intelligibility of the notion of first art, in order to get off the ground or be applicable in practice. Thus Di Monte is perfectly right to remark elsewhere in his commentary that I deny «that the notions of first art and ur-art are elements in our concept of art».

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[27] J. Levinson, *Defining Art Historically*, «British Journal of Aesthetics» 19 (1979), 3, pp. 232-250.

[28] J. Levinson, *The Irreducible Historicality of the Concept of Art*, «British Journal of Aesthetics» 42 (2002).

At the end of his commentary Di Monte suggests that my basic definition of arthood, in pointedly avoiding reliance on any substantive or normative notion of art, may render itself incapable of a justified, rather than simply ad hoc, sorting of objects into art and non-art. Like Focosi, Di Monte is deeply suspicious of simply deferring to the artworld in its recognition of various modes of Conceptualist, Minimalist, Appropriationist, and Exhibitionist activity as ones that issue, no questions asked, in artworks. One understands this suspicion, for no one likes to be scammed, conned, or hustled. But it should be borne in mind that acknowledging something to have arthood – which is just a certain sort of artifact status – is not thereby to attribute to it *any* value whatsoever – though it may, as I remark elsewhere, involve recognizing it to be making a *claim* to possess some sort of value or be worth engaging with.

Still, Di Monte's reflections lead one to think that perhaps we should after all give up the attempt to articulate a *unified* concept of art adequate to both traditional and avant-garde art, and instead content ourselves, as Di Monte suggests, with recognizing two *different* concepts, one adequate to the former and one adequate to the latter. But I am, at this late point, still hopeful that the unity of the concept can be retained, and along roughly intentional-historical lines.